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Grandma Muldoon's Widow

BY CANDACE ADELE BRAMBLE

Teddy, dear, the washing is ready. Will you take it down to Mrs. McCarthy now? asked Mrs. Rogers, as she came into the dining-room where Teddy was eating his breakfast.

Yes, mamma, of course I will, replied Teddy cheerfully; and a few moments later he went trudging sturdily down the street in front of his wagon, which held the big basket of clothes.

It was no trouble to Teddy to take the wash to Mrs. McCarthy. Indeed, it was a task which he rather enjoyed, since he had found what a dear, delightful old woman Mrs. McCarthy had for a mother.

She was little and old and feeble, but she was cheery and bright, and she knew the very nicest stories, and was always willing to tell them to Teddy, while he sat and rested after his long walk. As Teddy liked stories very much indeed, and as Grandma loved children equally well, the two soon grew to be great friends, and to-day, after the basket was safely deposited on the kitchen floor, Teddy walked on into the little sitting room, where Grandma was always to be found.

Good-morning, Grandma, he called out cheerily, as he entered the room.

Good-morning, laddie. You come like a ray of sunshine into this dark room, with your red cheeks and your cheery voice. Come up to the stove and warm yourself. I make no doubt your hands are like ice this chilly day, answered Grandma cordially from her chair by the stove.

After a time Teddy noticed that his friend did not seem quite her usual cheery old self, and he asked anxiously: What's the matter, Grandma? Don't you feel very well to-day?

Grandma roused herself with a start and answered hastily:

Oh, yes, laddie! I'm full as well as usual, but somehow I guess I've a touch of the blues. You see it's so lonesome, sitting here by myself day in and day out, with nothing to look at except that big bare brick wall, that sometimes it almost seems as if the folks in the world were all dead and I was left alone. I don't know what ever would become of me if you didn't come in sometimes to hearten me up a bit, and Grandma smiled lovingly at Teddy as she spoke.

Poor Grandma! thought Ted. It certainly was hard to be obliged to sit all day with nothing to look at but an ugly brick wall. If the window had been in front, he said after a moment's thoughtful pause, it would have been better, wouldn't it?

Yes, indeed, child? a great deal better. Then I could see all that goes on in the street, and it wouldn't be nothing like so lonesome. But there, I'm forgetting that beggars mustn't be choosers. I ought to be thankful that I've a roof over my head, and a good, faithful daughter to care for me in my helpless old age, instead of fretting because a window is not just where I'd like to have it. I'll stop it this minute, and tell you a story instead, and to all appearances Grandma forgot her troubles and during the rest of his visit was her own cheerful old self. But Ted did not forget, and when he went away he turned at the gate and looked back at the ugly little house reflectively.

I don't see why they didn't put a window in front when they made it, he said softly to himself. There's just room for one, and it would be lots nicer and lighter inside, besides letting poor Grandma see out. I wish I could make her a window; I s'pose I couldn't. It would take a lot of tools and a carpenter to do it, and carpenters charge money for their work, and Grandma Muldoon hasn't any money I know, so it's no use to think about it, and Teddy sighed as he turned away and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. As he did so his fingers came in contact with something round and smooth, and he drew out a silver dollar and looked at it lovingly. That dollar meant, to Teddy, a pair of bright, new skates, and for a moment, as he thought of them, poor Grandma and her dark little room were all forgotten; and then all at once, he remembered, and—

I wonder if a dollar would pay for a window, he said aloud to himself, and then he added hastily: Now then I couldn't use this if it would. I couldn't have any skates all winter if I had, and it would be just awful

not to, when the river's right in our back yard, almost; and Teddy thrust the coin back into his pocket and hurried away to school.

But the thought of poor, lonely Grandma came again and again to torment him, and that evening he looked up from the sum which he was adding and asked suddenly:

Mamma, do you think Uncle Ned would care if I spent the dollar he gave me for my birthday for someone else besides myself?

No, Ted, I do not think he would. He said you were to spend it for anything you like.

Well, mamma, and Ted rose from his chair and came around to his mother's side, if there was something that you wanted very much, and you had the money to buy it with; and there was someone you loved, who needed something just awfully, what do you think you would do, keep it yourself or give it to them?

Mrs. Rogers patted softly the rough, brown little hand on her knee, as she answered: I think, Teddy, you must work your problem out for yourself; I cannot advise you. But cannot you tell mother more about it, dear?

Teddy shook his head. No, mamma, I guess not now. I'll think it out first. And he went back to his book and slate. As he worked, he thought, and before bedtime his mind was made up as to how the silver piece should be spent.

The next morning Ted had all his morning tasks done, and was on his way down-town at an early hour, for he had business of importance to attend to, and was in a great hurry to be about it.

It's only making a hole in a wall and putting in a little bit of glass, I shouldn't think 't would cost more than a dollar, he said as he hurried down the street.

Mr. Jamison was the best carpenter in Birchville—Teddy knew, for his father had said so only that morning—and as he lived not far away, Ted soon found himself at the door; and a moment later Mr. Jamison, as he arose from his late breakfast, was surprised to hear a little boy, with shining eyes and rosy cheeks, gravely ask:

How much would you charge, if you please, Mr. Jamison, to put a window in the Widow McCarthy's house?

The Widow McCarthy—let's see, that's down on East Henry Street, isn't it? Well, young man, a window such as you would want there, I should think would cost about five dollars.

Teddy gave a little gasp of astonishment. Oh, he cried disappointedly, I never thought it would be so much! I haven't only a dollar. I'm so sorry, and he turned to go away.

Here, hold on a minute, young man, and let's talk this matter over. What do you want of a window in Widow McCarthy's house? You don't live there, do you?

Oh, no; I'm Teddy Rogers, and I live right here on this street, only three blocks away. But you see, sir, I wanted the window for Grandma Muldoon. She isn't really my grandma; I only call her so; she's Mr. McCarthy's mother, and she's sick, and it's awful lonesome with nothing to look at in that dark room, an' if there was another window she could see out, you know; an' it's about the best Christmas I could give her, isn't it, sir? I want to do something for her; she's always so good to me, and tells me such nice stories, an' I thought that a bit of sunshine coming in would be just the jolliest good present of anything I could think of, and I know Grandma would think so too, and so would you if you just saw her room.

When at last he paused for breath, Mr. Jamison said with a twinkle in his eye: It does seem a pity that so fine a person as your old friend seems to be should not bask in all the sunshine she needs; and I'll tell you what I'll do.

I'll exchange work with you, if you like. If you will come here and do chores for me for an hour every morning, except Sunday, of course, for a month, I'll put a window into the Widow McCarthy's cottage and call it square. What do you say; will you do it?

Yes, oh, yes, Mr. Jamison, I'll be glad to! returned Ted joyfully. And I'll begin this morning if you want me to, and will tell you what to do.

Well, you might begin by piling up the wood at my back door.

Come on; I'll show you where it is if you think you'd like to tackle it. Cook will tell you when you've been at it an hour. And Mr. Jamison led the way to the wood-pile, and then turned and walked gravely away; but after he was out of Teddy's sight he smiled as he said: Of course he'll give it up after a morning or so, but he seemed such a manly, honest little chap, and was so bent on getting his window, that I couldn't bear to disappoint him. He really seemed delighted when I mentioned that pile of wood, and Mr. Jamison laughed outright as he shook himself into his overcoat and shut the hall door behind him. If Mr. Jamison really believed that Teddy would not stand by his bargain, he soon found out his mistake; for every morning, rain or shine, found him at the back door ready to take orders and do whatever he was told.

The month had nearly crept by when one crisp, sunshiny morning Grandma Muldoon, all wrapped up in shawls and blankets, was driven in Mr. Jamison's sleigh to Teddy's home for a little visit to brighten her up a bit, they said. Teddy had his own private reasons, however, for this polite move, which Grandma did not even guess at, so happy was she over the prospective sleigh ride and visit.

No sooner had the sleigh disappeared down the street than Mr. Jamison and his man appeared bringing with them a window-frame, sashes and tools. Two days later Grandma was brought back, and wonder of wonders, she found her room transformed beyond belief, for there shone a window just where she had always wanted one. Between the snowy curtains draped back with festoons of evergreen hung the loveliest Christmas wreath you ever saw, all studded with crimson holly berries and everlasting, and best of all, the golden, blessed sunshine of the clear winter morning was pouring in, flooding the whole room with its mellow radiance; but the sunshine wasn't brighter than the smile that shone through the tears that coursed down Grandma Muldoon's wrinkled face, nor the holly berries redder than Teddy's cheeks as he stood, proud and happy, by her side.

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